

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 305

By Henry

A RESOLUTION to congratulate Head Coach Melanie Balcomb and the Vanderbilt University Commodores on winning the 2009 Southeastern Conference Women's Basketball Tournament Championship.

WHEREAS, the Tennessee General Assembly is pleased to specially honor and commend those extraordinary athletic teams that, through their magnificent exploits, bring honor to the State of Tennessee and serve as exceptional ambassadors of this State; and

WHEREAS, the Vanderbilt University Women's Basketball Team is one such estimable team that achieved an extraordinary level of success during the 2008-2009 season, establishing a record of twenty-six wins and nine losses, including the SEC Tournament Championship Title; and

WHEREAS, finishing the season in the Top Ten as the eighth-ranked team in the nation, the 2008-2009 Vanderbilt Commodores women's basketball team balanced an explosive offense with an unrelenting defense, giving unwary opponents no quarter, as they soundly defeated teams, including long-time rival the University of Tennessee, to show that heart, determination, and preparation can overcome any foe; and

WHEREAS, with a conference record of ten wins against four losses, Vanderbilt entered the Southeastern Conference Tournament without the services of their tenacious leading rebounder and center Hannah Tuomi due to an injury; banding together to face their conference foes, the Commodores fought Tuomi-like with grit and determination in every game; and

WHEREAS, starting four guards and one forward/guard, the Commodores defeated Georgia, 69-61, grabbing important offensive rebounds and outhustling the Lady Bulldogs on their way to the semi-finals to face the young Lady Tigers of Louisiana State University; and

WHEREAS, down at halftime to LSU by three points, Vanderbilt attacked the basket in the second half to take the lead and the victory, 61-47, as every player stepped up, making key plays as they frustrated their opponents into committing twenty turnovers; and

WHEREAS, sparked by the heroic effort of the best guard/center in the nation, Jennifer Risper, and the tremendous play of Christina Wirth, the Commodores rallied from a slow start in the Championship game and stood steadfast against a determined Auburn Tiger team, winning 61-54, as they got timely three-point baskets, played fierce defense, and executed their masterful game plan to clinch the victory with a pass interception by Wirth in the final seconds; and

WHEREAS, the 2009 SEC Tournament Championship is the second in three years for the Commodores, the third under Head Coach Melanie Balcomb, and the sixth overall in Vanderbilt history, joining the teams from 1993, 1995, 2002, 2004, and 2007; and

WHEREAS, Jennifer Risper was named to the All-Tournament team, joining teammate Christina Wirth who was named SEC Tournament Most Valuable Player to become just the sixth Commodore to win the prestigious honor alongside such Vandy greats as Sheri Sam, Chantelle Anderson, and Carla Thomas; and

WHEREAS, the esteemed members of this championship basketball team include Amy Malo, Jennifer Risper, Christina Wirth, Ashlee Bridge, Lauren Lueders, Merideth Marsh, Jessica Mooney, Amber Norton, Chanel Chisholm, Jence Rhoads, Rebecca Silinski, Hannah Tuomi, Jordan Coleman and Tia Gibbs; and

WHEREAS, the 2008-2009 Commodores have enjoyed the inspirational leadership and exemplary skills of an extraordinary pair of seniors who also serve as Team Captains: Jennifer Risper and Christina Wirth, who have left an indelible mark on the history of women's basketball at Vanderbilt University; and

WHEREAS, a unanimous All-SEC First Team selection, the SEC Scholar-Athlete of the Year, and winner of multiple All-American honors, sure-shot Christina Wirth of Mesa, Arizona, tallied 1,596 career points, becoming the ninth all-time scorer in Vanderbilt history on her way to being ranked in the all-time Top Ten in nearly a dozen different categories for the Commodores; and

WHEREAS, honored as not only the SEC Defensive Player of the Year but the Defensive Player of the Year by the Women's Basketball Coaches Association, fearless Jennifer Risper of Moreno Valley, California, led the SEC in steals for two years, joining the all-time Top Ten for steals at Vanderbilt with 221, and igniting the Vanderbilt defensive efforts that resulted in over twenty opponent turnovers a game; and

WHEREAS, this tremendous team is led by Head Coach Melanie Balcomb who laid the groundwork for this year's championship by sharing with these young women her substantial knowledge of basketball, her many years of coaching and athletic experience, and her passion both for the sport of basketball and for excellence in every endeavor; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the superb leadership of Head Coach Balcomb, the Vanderbilt University Commodores enjoy the outstanding coaching and assistance of Assistant Coach Vicky Picott, Assistant Coach Lisa Cermignano, Assistant Coach Kim Rosamond, Graduate Assistant Caroline Williams, and Director of Basketball Operations/Video Coordinator Justin VanOrman; and

WHEREAS, the Vanderbilt Commodores women's basketball team is also ably served by Athletic Trainer Michele Loftis, Strength and Conditioning Coach Tasha Weddle, Sports Information Director Chris Weinman, Academic Services Coordinator Christy Hogan, and Administrative Assistant Vicki Spina; and

WHEREAS, the basketball players at Vanderbilt University epitomize all that is good in today's student-athlete, as they have achieved a premier level of success in competition and academics. The perseverance, determination, work ethic, and talent of this group of young women not only made possible a championship basketball season, but also surely bodes well for their success in every future enterprise; and

WHEREAS, this General Assembly finds it appropriate to acknowledge and applaud the Vanderbilt University Commodores women's basketball team and specially recognize their extraordinary achievements both on and off the basketball court as examples of the exceptional quality of the youth of America; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

CONCURRING, that we honor and congratulate the coaches, staff, and members of the Vanderbilt University Women's Basketball Team on winning the 2009 Southeastern Conference Tournament Championship and that we wish the Commodores well in all their future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.